

A little Hello! from “Our Lady of Hope Parish” in Moscow, a City Center Marist Parish

The buzz from the 2018 World Cup has quietened –and, although “snowflakes keep falling on our heads!”, this little community is thriving in the biggest metropolis on the European continent; alive and praising God, “who does great things for us”... and we are holding up the Marist spirit, if not the Marist flag!

So how are we doing? Fine, thank you – and thank God! After the fun of the World Cup frenzy, most of us put away our football boots, and got back to the humdrum of making a living, raising children and sending remittances to home in faraway continents.

We moved back to life, let’s say, “as normal”. Sincerely, our normal inclination is to keep a low profile and not to talk about ourselves. However, recently, friendly nudges from the Moscow City Administration are encouraging us to lift our heads a bit higher. At the invitation of the Department of Nationality Policies and Inter-religious Relations, of the Moscow City Administration, we’ve been taking part in committee meetings. Be slow to say No! to an invitation.

Among some positive results, the best, is that our French-language Choir will take part in the “Paschal Marathon of Choirs”. This Marathon brings together choirs worshiping in minority religious groups and associations. The Marathon will take place in the evening of Palm Sunday.

(Frank published one of the choir’s u-Tube recordings on the Marist network last year entitled “Chorale Francophone de la Paroisse Notre Dame de l’Espérance à Moscou “Mon Dieu est bon”. Good man, Frank, doing a grand job!)

So who are we? The best, quick, and witty description was offered by an Italian deacon, Antonio Santi – a chemical engineer by profession, with forty years’ experience of the Soviet Union, and the new Russia, under his belt; “You merit the Standard and Poors’ assessment table for national economies; a Triple AAA rating Parish” In fact, we are an African, American and Asian Parish in the capital of the Russian Federation. With, of course, Russians and Europeans too! And the occasional Arab from Syria and Latinos.

Mind you, if you look for us, Our Lady of Hope Parish, you won’t wander across some baroque masterpiece, or a Gothic or a Romanesque edifice, with our name on the front door.

Our thriving parish meets joyfully and noisily behind closed doors in hired halls, quietly in private residences, at other times, in embassy premises, or occasionally in the “prayer rooms” of a morgue or a crematorium, and in the open air of a cemetery. All within the law laid down for “officially registered, local religious organizations”. And in our case, that’s been defended, proven and ratified in civil law courts on several occasions in the last two years. Let’s change the subject.

So, what more to say? Enough said! Why not just give a click on the two short videos accompanying this note? They may provide a taste of our life and worship. The coming together, in joy, for the Crown of the Week – Sunday Mass, by members of minority groups, living peacefully in the biggest metropolis of the European continent. Protected by the law and made welcome.

A friend of the parish, Firmin, a Cameroonian who teaches in the Vladimir City University, filmed them on his mobile phone at the end of the main Parish Mass on the 10th March 2019. Yes, it was the first Sunday of Lent, and yes, we did include a wedding for a Filipino couple in the Sunday Mass, and also a replay of Ash Wednesday. Needs must!

Michael John Ryan SM Moscow -Our Lady of Hope Parish, 29 March 2019